

# SKYLINE

August 2020



The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Bevis Marks photos: Louis Berk

*the magazine of the* **FRIENDS OF THE CITY CHURCHES**



## Dear Friends

PHOTO: MICHAEL BANFIELD



I have been Acting Honorary Treasurer since April 2020, and am looking forward to being elected to join the Board of Trustees. I should

like to introduce myself to those Friends who have not yet met me.

I am an accountant by profession. Admittedly not my childhood dream, which largely involved sailing, because as any avid reader of Arthur Ransome knows, the world is full of adventures if one only has a dinghy. However, a career in finance came a close second. I followed the traditional route: qualify, marry, move to the suburbs and reproduce – and truly that was more fun than it sounds. Now my children are grown up, my time is my own again and early last year I moved home happily to London.

I became a Church Watcher about four years ago. Wandering past **All Hallows London Wall**, I saw an intriguing sign – Church Watchers Are Here – so I went inside and asked ‘who, what and why?’ Two gentlemen guided me round the church, and told me about the organisation. Inspired by their enthusiasm, I met Brian Evans (then Watch Manager). After a trial Watch at **St Botolph Aldgate**, and deciding this was very much my cup of tea, I began. To those who have Watched with me, what fun I have had! Thank you for your kindness and indulgence.

A rather convivial afternoon with the charming editor of this magazine, and needing little persuasion, I responded to the call for a new Treasurer; and so began my tenure just as lockdown started.

I am very grateful to John Wilson our current bookkeeper, who is retiring and passing me a nice clean set of accounting records. I know I can rely on him and all the Trustees to help me as I get settled in. I’d like


also to thank Neil Graham, Honorary Treasurer until recently, who has been so generous with his time and expertise.

I had hoped to meet many of you at the AGM, postponed, of course, until September. In the meantime:

Firstly, where the Friends give money to support suitable projects (following an application and a review by the Trustees) the Board has decided to raise the maximum amount available from £2,000 to £5,000. As now, the amount given will depend upon the project and the need identified, and is only provided for City churches.

Secondly, the Melba Coombs Trust has agreed to extend the period the Friends have to raise money,

which the Trust will match. The capital amount will be held by the Friends, with all the interest generated by that capital providing a long-term income source. This is an incredibly generous offer made in honour of an exceptional woman who was instrumental in creating the Friends as it is today. Certain events will fundraise for this, and I’d like to encourage you all to take part. Donations are gratefully received – if they could be marked Melba Coombs they will go into the desired pot.

Stay safe and well. 

*Skyline’s editor is duly flattered, and hopes Becky will never feel she has drunk the Editor’s Shilling*

### HONORARY SECRETARY

## Annual General Meeting

On 3 July 2020 the Charity Commission for England and Wales made a temporary amendment to the ‘Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020’. This allows us to delay the AGM until 30 September 2020, and overrides the timing required in our constitution. Therefore, we need to hold some form of AGM by the end of September.

There is no guarantee that the situation regarding public transport and large meetings will improve in the autumn. (We had nearly 70 Friends at the AGM last year.) So, after consultation with the Charity Commission, the Trustees propose the following course of action.

The AGM documents will be posted on the FCC website during the first week of August 2020. If you are unable to access these documents please request a copy by post from Karen Hearn, in the office. It would be helpful if you enclosed a large (c4) stamped self-addressed envelope.

The proposals we need to consider are:

- ➡ Confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 20 June 2019.
- ➡ Agreement of the Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020.
- ➡ To accept the resignations of the following Trustees and Officers.  
Trustee: Alexey Moskvina and the Bookkeeper: John Wilson
- ➡ To elect Trustees and Officers:

Nancy Jane Branson, Signe Kjaere Hoffos and Tony Tucker have completed their terms of office and have indicated their willingness to stand for re-election for a period of three years.

Rebecca Banfield (Acting Honorary Treasurer) has indicated her willingness to stand for election as Trustee for a term of three years.

- ➡ To re-appoint Keith Raffan and Co as Independent Examiners.

**Comments will be welcome until 1 September 2020. After that date we shall assume tacit consent from those who do not positively object to any proposal, and will submit our annual return to the Charity Commission.**



# EDITORIAL

In the words of L P Hartley: 'The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there'. We no longer send small boys up chimneys, we no longer burn witches. Slavery was heinous. The only acceptable remedy was its abolition, and that happened, in the main, in 19c. But slavery was the mores of the time. It happened, and I doubt there was a wealthy family in the 17c and 18c which did not prosper on its back: not just the slave trade itself, but cotton, tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar. What we need to consider is what those rich men did with their wealth. Did they spend it all on extravagant living? Did they use it to buy influence and self-aggrandisement? Some did. Others used it philanthropically, and it is they who are getting it in the neck now. The charitable foundations, established with one man's personal fortune, to provide education/housing/succour for the poor were until recently, respected. I think there will be few City churches without a memorial to someone whose hands, according to the anachronistic censure of the moment, are not squeaky clean.

Toppling statues is not a solution. You cannot unhappen the past. You can forget the past, but then run the risk of repeating its iniquities. I was distressed, therefore, to read in the papers that the bust of John Cass had been removed from **St Botolph Aldgate**, and that the school was changing its name. However, I do not believe everything I see reported in the press, and was delighted to receive an email from the Ven. Luke Miller, The Archdeacon of London: 'In answer to your question, permission was sought by the PCC and granted by the Chancellor for the interim removal of the bust of Sir John Cass from its place in the baptistry to another part of the church. This is to allow the PCC time to consider the long-term options.'

'When sorrows come, they come not single spies' and the rest of the battalion includes coronavirus. Gone are the days when we wanted no answer to the enquiry 'how are you?' We have become anxious for each other. Trustee Lesley Thrift compiled a series of photographic walks to circulate among Watchers. We had the time to enjoy them, and think beyond them. She invited Watchers to send in anecdotes and musings. We have a selection on pp13-15 and there will be more in November. Friends have shown themselves to be generous and altruistic.

Once it was clear that the churches would be empty for a while, most of the valuable stuff was taken to HM Tower of London. You might have seen Our Honorary Secretary and her husband (who is a mere 6ft) ferrying the Abchurch plate. Nobody bats an eye in the City!

Finally, thank you to all Friends who have written either to me or to our Administrator to say how pleased you were to see

*Skyline* as a sign of normality in

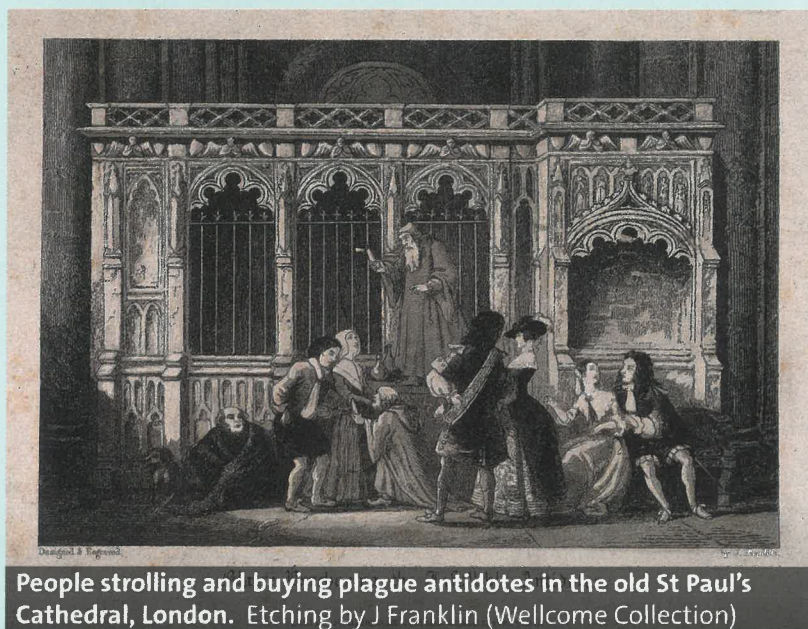
an abnormal world. Lots of unsolicited praise has come. It has been good to receive, and rightly goes to the contributors. To misquote Lord Kitchener: *Skyline* needs you. Write (perhaps for the first time) a snippet or an article, please do.

JUDY STEPHENSON



PHOTO: JUDY GUY-BRISCOE

Walter Guy-Briscoe



People strolling and buying plague antidotes in the old St Paul's Cathedral, London. Etching by J Franklin (Wellcome Collection)



## DAVID JESSOP

**St Mary Abchurch**, following the Church of England Guidelines, has been open for private prayer since 15 June. The office is open Monday to Thursday 11-1 in the first instance as we get back to normal.

## LESLEY THRIFT

I would like to thank the Watchers for their response to the straw poll in respect of resuming our church Watching for the remainder of this year.

Whilst we had a jolly good response, and with the result of 50% wanting to return in September, unfortunately this percentage of Watchers would not enable us to cover our designated churches.

Hopefully when we do a follow up poll, this will be more positive, and we shall then be able to move forward from this dreadful year.

## NANCY BRANSON

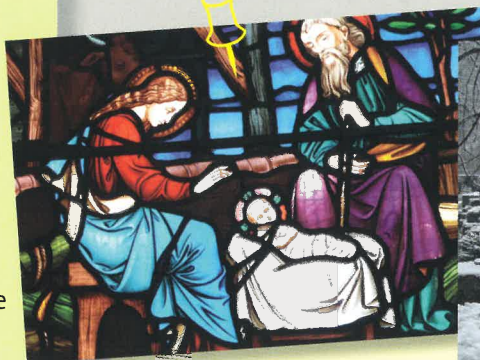
### CAROL SERVICE 2020

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to read the lessons for the carol service. Over the years, those of you who regularly join us for the carol service will have seen the same Friends year after year. It is generous of them and I am very grateful. But it would be

wonderful to see some new faces. The only requirement is a strong, clear, well-projected voice.

Each reader receives a printed copy of the text in advance in order to become familiar with the reading, and what it would feel like to read it aloud. On the day, there is a folder on the lectern which contains each reading in large, spaced print, with everything that needs to be said, on a hard, plastic sheet. Every reader turns the page over, leaving the next page ready for you.

## ✧ Noticeboard ✧



### Only 5 shopping months to Christmas

Friends were invited to submit photographs for the FCC Christmas card. There are three new designs all wishing us a happy Christmas and a prosperous, healthy new year. They remain £5 for 10 + £1 pp. Please use the enclosed merchandise form.

## KAREN HEARN

### Friendly exhortations!

Subscriptions to the FCC went up in August 2015 to £20 (single) £25 (joint) pa but many Standing Orders still remain at the old rate. Here we are exactly five years on with another request please to check that you are paying at the right rate. (Let lockdown be good for something.) We sent *Skyline* to everyone with a reminder in the (seemingly overlooked) editorial of May 2020; and everyone is getting this, but thereafter Friends still paying at the old rate will no longer receive *Skyline*. We hope this will prompt people to get in touch to ask why! So, if you do not receive the November issue, check that your Standing Order is up to date, and then notify the office please. Friends! Look to your fivers (or become Friends for Life).

Also, many of the addresses (both postal

and email) which we have on file are now outdated. We emailed everyone on the database last November about the Melba Coombs Memorial Fund, but many bounced back. If you didn't receive that message, haven't corresponded with us by email this year, or have recently changed your email address, please send us your current details to stay in touch.

We now have a dedicated email address to receive updated contact details: please write directly to **contact\_details@london-city-churches.org.uk** with your full name and any changes. This mailbox will be monitored by me and a dedicated volunteer. We will only contact you according to your GDPR preferences, and only on FCC business. In this difficult time, it would very helpful if we could circulate information to as many Friends as possible by email, so your support would be appreciated.

## JUDY GUY-BRISCOE

### TRUSTEES MEETINGS IN LOCKDOWN

Trustees meetings have changed!

We no longer squash around the table in the FCC office enjoying savouries supplied by the editor of *Skyline*, cake courtesy of the Watchers Manager and fruit from our lovely administrator.

Now we Zoom!

For the uninitiated, you can Zoom from anywhere as long as you have reception for your phone and you've downloaded the app. This flexibility was



It is marvellous that so many Friends and others join us for this service and I would be so pleased if any more of you would like to read a lesson. Yes, it usually does take a certain amount of courage to 'get up there' - but it is also rewarding!

If you would like to read a lesson, or even like to think about it without making a commitment now, please do contact me on **nancy@london-city-churches.org.uk**

Many thanks.

## The Chairman's outing . . .

. . . scheduled for 26 September has bitten the dust. There are too many imponderables. The decision was not taken lightly.

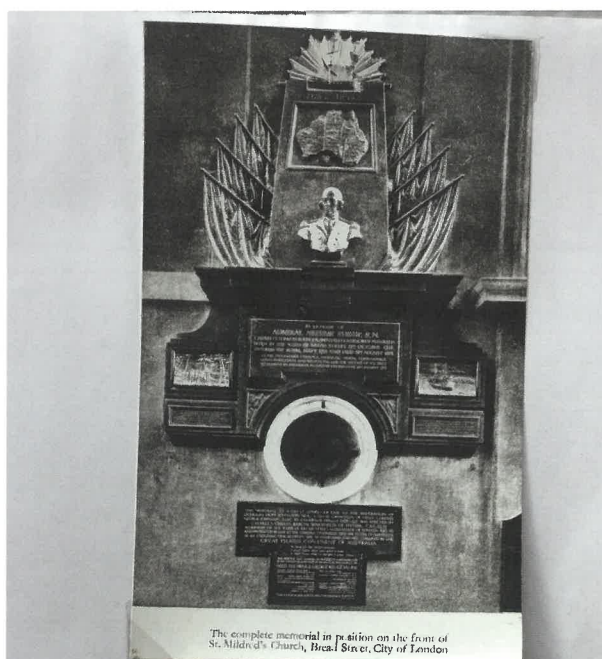
The FCC Committee has regretfully elected to postpone all forthcoming Friends events until we can be confident that it is safe to congregate and to use public transport. Even walks require groups to cluster, in order to stay together and hear the guide. None of our usual lecture venues can welcome groups at the present time.

The situation regarding carol services is currently in a state of flux, but we are still hopeful, and looking forward to ours on Monday 14 December. That will be confirmed in November's *Skyline* and on the website (but in the meantime see the notice above).

ably demonstrated by our esteemed Chairman when he joined our meeting on 1 May from **St Mary Abchurch** where he was supervising the London Electricity Board, who were reconnecting our supply. Zoom is free and meetings are limited to 40 minutes, no bad thing in my view.

We discuss our standing agenda, papers' being circulated beforehand so that we can finish in the allotted time. Most of our decisions are dependent on the decisions of others so we are keeping many 'watching briefs'.

## Letters to the Editor



Above and below: photographs from the 1960s by Nicholas Redman

**Thomasina McGuigan writes** Further to an article in the February 2020 issue on Asia and Oceania the author may be interested in the attached pictures I have of the Admiral Arthur Phillip memorial (left) in location at **St Mildred Bread Street**, and subsequently on the wall at Gateway House in 1968 (later photo taken by my father, Nicholas Redman, who worked at Gateway House).

The article made a supposition about the memorial's being retrieved from rubble. A brochure I have about the memorial's re-erection on 8 May 1968 would seem to support this view.

As an aside, having seen the cover photo of **St Alban Wood Street** on the most recent issue, you may be interested in the attached photo

showing it looking resplendent, towering over the other buildings, taken by my father in 1968.

### Guy de la Bédoyère writes

My cousin Ben Goodger, who is one of your members, suggested you might like to know about this.

During the last few weeks of lockdown I've made some paintings, copied from 19c originals, of some of the lost Wren churches demolished in the 1800s. I've compiled them into a video which I made up from pictures taken as I painted them.

Here's a link to the video which you are welcome to post. **Some Lost Churches of Sir Christopher Wren – paintings from the Covid-19 Era**  
<https://youtu.be/oKyV9oMnUF4>







SPENCER WILLIAMS

## HENRY MOORE & PATRICK HERON

**W**hen he accepted the commission to carve a centrally placed altar in **St Stephen Walbrook** in the early 1970s, Henry Moore (1898-1986) spent three weeks in the church pondering and planning how he would go about it. He would have been only too aware that Sir Christopher Wren's restrained, classical, domed space – a masterpiece of geometry and light – would make it a formidable competitor for any sculptural work, and that the commission would be a daunting challenge.

The first thing to say about the altar is that it is perfectly proportioned

– in fact it is as perfectly proportioned as the interior of St Stephen. If it were an inch higher or lower, an inch wider or narrower it would not look right. It is precisely the correct size, and strikes an impeccable balance between itself and its setting.

And it floats. Not literally, of course. But just as Wren's magnificent dome seems to float effortlessly on those twelve slender Corinthian columns, so Moore's altar appears to float just an inch or so above its plinth. If the altar had been flush with the plinth it would have looked too solid and massive – after all it weighs something like eight tons – but, in the

way he carved it, Moore achieved an almost impossible lightness. It casts a dark circular shadow around itself, which contrasts so dramatically with the way the smooth top surface catches the light. Current practice is, I think, not to put an altar cloth on it and it does not need one. It gleams pure and white, like the finest linen.

Michelangelo famously said that every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it. The block of stone that Moore used is rough Travertine – apparently from the same quarry where Michelangelo sourced his material – and he did something quite extraordinary with it. He carved it so far, and then stopped – creating a sense of mystery as to what lies beneath its surface. It is not a featureless, regular disc of stone. It is irregular – marked by strange contours, indentations and protrusions. To me it is as if blocks of wood, lumps of stone and planks have been assembled to form an altar, and then a cloth thrown over them. Perhaps it suggests the rough altar Abraham built on which to sacrifice his son Isaac, but transformed into the table at which Jesus celebrated the Last Supper.

The altar was carved by Moore in 1972, and for a number of years languished in a field at his home in Perry Green, Hertfordshire while St Stephen underwent an extensive restoration to prevent its imminent collapse. Then there was the hurdle of two ecclesiastical court cases needed to decide its fate. Was it a 'Holy Table' and was it a suitable artifact to be placed in St Stephen? The answer to both was ultimately affirmative.

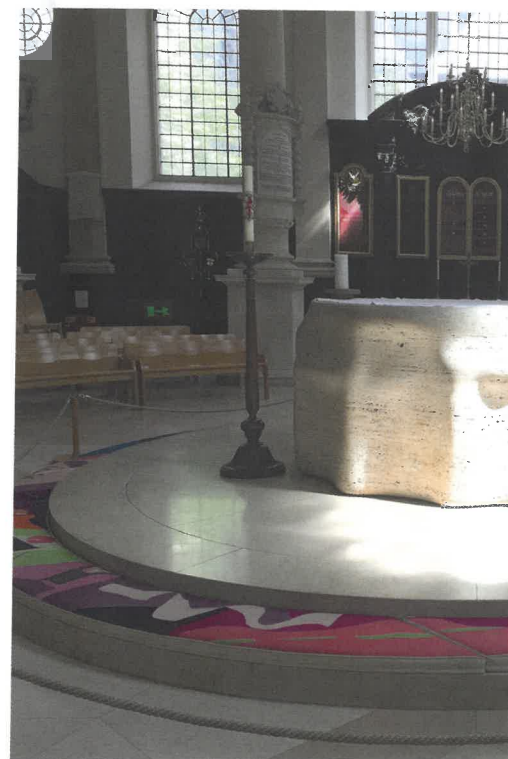
The restoration works carried out at St Stephen between 1978 and 1987 included the removal of Keith New's contemporary stained glass windows (which were re-installed to join other windows by New in Norwich Cathedral) and their replacement with clear, blown glass, more sympathetic to Wren's original conception. But it meant that the church was virtually drained of colour. It was, therefore, a

stroke of genius in the early 1990s to commission Patrick Heron to design kneelers to circle the plinth bearing Moore's altar.

Patrick Heron (1920-1999) was one of Britain's foremost abstract artists, and colour was at the heart of his painting. The designs he made for the kneelers hark back to his work of the 1970s with their unique interpretation of the figurative in abstract terms – colour determining the shapes, or forms, which balance one another in a riot of liturgical shades that always look different and always delight the eye. Heron, like Moore, was born in Yorkshire but moved to Cornwall with his parents at the age of five, and then to Welwyn Garden City where his father ran a silk fabric business for which Patrick made designs from his teenage years.

He knew and was a great admirer of Moore and liked to mimic Moore telling off Margaret Thatcher – in his broad Yorkshire accent – about art education in Britain.

The best time to see the altar and the kneelers is around midday when the sun is shining – and with the lights turned off. The lighting scheme at St Stephen is excellent, but shadows and the gentle filtering of light through the windows bring the full glory of Wren's majestic architecture to life. And shafts of sunlight falling on the altar create transient patterns and illuminate the kneelers to give a sense of mystery and drama. Heron complements Moore and, across the centuries, both enhance the potency of Wren. In my view it is one of the most precious sights to be seen anywhere in London. ✨



TIM KIDD

## BOTHER THESE BEASTLY BUGS

**B**oudica, Black Death, Blitz, Big Bang, Brexit: all were, or are, existential threats to the City. Even when other events – Great Plague and Great Fire – disrupted the alliterative pattern, we still kept doggedly on. Now we're threatened by Covid-19, will the City and 'our' churches return to normal?

I'll assume the mantle of A A Milne's Eeyore in the hope there will be some ever-optimistic Winnie-the-Poohs to contradict me – and cheer us up – in future editions of *Skyline*.

Amongst the memorials in **St Edmund the King** is one to Church Warden Gurney. The Gurneys were amongst the founding fathers of today's Barclays Bank, whose Lombard Street headquarters were near the church. They used their time, talents and wealth to support their parish church. These God and Mammon bonds will be found in every City church.

**St Paul's Cathedral's** post-war stone cleaning was initiated by a

donation from a merchant bank\* and the recent repairs to **St Bride's** steeple similarly relied on a seed-corn donation by an American broking firm. (There is a published list of major donors from the local business community.) The spiritual needs of City workers to find 'the peace of all things calm' are met when they enter a church privately on their own or as part of a congregation: Holy Communion, modern worship, weddings, memorial services, concerts, coffee bars and carol services – I thanked a rector for an uplifting carol service and he sighed wearily

'nine down; four to go.'

Post-Covid-19, some financial services companies (including bankers, brokers, insurers, accountants and lawyers) will, like their customers, close; whereas survivors will have to slash their charitable donations, as they weather a few lean years. Low, or even negative interest rates mean lower profits for banks.

Furthermore, as the Covid-19 analyses become more reliable, it's possible that the tentative conclusion that rates of re-infection are higher in globally-connected cities, like London, will be substantiated. Already, two thirds of financial services jobs are outside London, so, people and their employers may decide it's cheaper and less of a Covid-19 risk to work remotely, from outside the City. Could it be Birmingham rather than the Blitz or Brexit that proves the final blow for the City's churches? Or to conform to government policy of levelling up the north, a new financial centre might be established in Bradford or, possibly, Barnard Castle. ✨

\* The name of the bank had been Robert Fleming but Robin sold out to Chase Manhattan in 2000, so it's now part of J P Morgan.



Plague doctor





## THE WINDOWS IN ST MARY LE BOW

The bombing of **St Mary le Bow** in May, 1941 left the interior totally gutted, although thankfully the glorious steeple survived. The restoration, under Laurence King, did not seek to recreate the original Wren furnishings and fittings, but, instead, to build a modern interior, mostly designed by John Hayward.

I had the privilege of meeting John and, indeed, we planned to lead a guided walk together (I was going to talk about the churches and he would have focused on his fine stained glass work). Tragically, John died a few weeks before the event took place, but his work remains and St Mary le Bow's interior features much of his craftsmanship, including the famous stained glass windows.

The windows in the east show, in the centre, Christ in Majesty, in the north (on the left as you look at it), Mary holding the Wren church, and in the south, St Paul. Mary and St Paul are surrounded by images of every one of the surviving Wren churches and towers – it is great

fun to stand in the nave and try to identify all of them!

The vibrant red-coloured west windows both show St Paul. In the south (left) window he is accompanied by St Thomas Becket, who was born in Cheapside, and the window also shows the Great Seal of the Lord Mayor, his residence (the Mansion House), and the coats of arms of six of the Great Twelve livery companies.

The north window shows the Common Seal, the Guildhall and the arms of the other six Great Twelve. If you take a livery companies booklet with you, it is an enjoyable challenge to try to identify all the coats of arms! ✂



## BOOK REVIEW



### FAITH IN THE CITY

NIKI GORICK

Introduction by Edward Lucie Smith

Hardback 170 pages

Unicorn Publishing Group 2020

ISBN 978-1-912690-73-2

£25; £18.75 for a limited period,  
direct from the publisher  
(+ £3.50 p+p)

Niki Gorick is a fine art photographer, specialising in images of London and Londoners for over 20 years. Some of you may indeed know (of) her.

This is not a book to 'read' although Edward Lucie Smith's introduction is lucid and helpful. Friends know the difference between metropolitan London and the City: others are less sure, but his words 'Powerful within this area, and crucial to its development, has been the Christian religion' strike a chord.

Friends might easily skip these first five pages and go straight to the

heart of the photographs. Of course it is a coffee table book: one to dip into and put down for a visitor to look at whilst coffee is prepared and served. It is not just the faith sites but also the way the sights of faith have been presented – 'atmospheric' is a hackneyed word, but apposite here.

A telling, early chapter headed 'Preconceptions' states 'There is [reviewer's italics] **only St Paul's Cathedral**, hosting very formal, ceremonial events. The City is essentially a "godless" place dedicated exclusively to money making.' This is only partly corrected by William Russell, the current Lord Mayor's preface. Symbolically the words are printed on the photograph of Bishop Richard Chartres' final service, with clergy filing out from all three west doors of St Paul's into the dark of the City. Then Bishop Sarah Mullally comes a few pages later in daylight, to bless London from those same steps after her official installation.

We'll be clergy spotting as well

as church spotting. But the vergers, congregations, visitors, livery company masters, lay helpers are all here too. Not just the Christian churches either; we have views of Muslim prayers in Wax Chandlers' Hall, Sikhs in the Bedouin Tent at **St Ethelburga within Bishopsgate** and Jews in **The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Bevis Marks**.

All levels of churchmanship shine through with clerical dress (or undress) to match. Shared buildings (**St Mary Abchurch**, of course), and shared altars – Fr Luke Miller and Fr Jacob Anish Varghese of the St Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church at **St Andrew by the Wardrobe** for example.

Laughter, solemnity, celebration, service: all are here in these pages. No index, so you just have to turn the pages.

Encourage loved ones to purchase the book for you as your Christmas present this year, and then see if you really need the captions to the photographs.

**PAUL SIMMONS** ✂



# GRAFFITI IN ST MARY ABCHURCH

**W**hen the new **St Mary Abchurch** opened in 1686, the congregation set about decorating the Norway oak panelling and box pews. The pupils of Merchant Taylor's School, returning from their sojourn in **St Katharine Cree** during the rebuild, cut, scratched and carved with the exuberance, inventiveness and lack of discretion as befitted their youth. The adults were more discreet and covert in the placing of their defacings. The graffiti produced can be placed into two rough groups, the religious and secular.

## RELIGIOUS

In 1597, James VI of Scotland published *Daemonologie*, in which he wrote of evil spirits and how to deal with them:

'they will come in and pearce through whatsoever house or Church, though all ordinarie passages be closed, by whatsoever open, the aire may enter in at.'

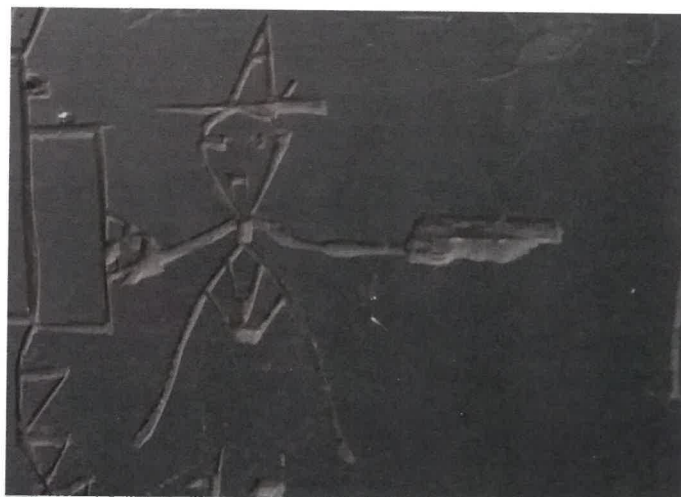
Although this had been written almost a century before, the warning was taken seriously. A number of different apotropaic (often called Witches) marks are found in the church. These were thought to deter or trap evil spirits and thus nullify their malign intent.

The first such mark is found on the outside of the tower door (where 'the aire may enter in at') where a neatly cut capital w, formed from two overlapping capital vs, is found. This is thought to be an appeal to Mary, *Virgo Virginum*, Virgin of Virgins, for protection against evil spirits and possibly a warning for them

not to enter. There are a number of other examples of this on the panelling in the gallery and church. In a box pew is a different appeal to the Virgin. An AM, again neatly cut, meaning *Ave Maria*, Hail Mary: a silent prayer fixed in wood. These requests to Mary are intriguing. Her significance had been diminished by the Anglican church. In the 1662 edition of the *Prayer Book* used in Abchurch, the only references to her are Magnificat, the Creed and three festive days. James II, a Roman Catholic convert, his monogram high on the Gibbons reredos at the centre of the Garter insignia, came to the throne the year before Abchurch opened and may have given some freedom to expression of these sentiments. However, both types of mark are present throughout the country and can't all be from his short reign.

written with quill pens and owned penknives to make and repair them. The compasses and dividers for geometry, along with the penknives, were doubtless used to make their graffiti.

There are three different patterns of these. The simplest and crudest, made by lines at right angles, form a net which caught the evil spirits like fish. The two other types are based on circles. The spirits, intrigued by the pattern, enter it and then, captured in continuous, unending lines, can find no exit and are thus trapped, and their



The boys seem to be particularly concerned with protection against evil. On the panelling to the north of the altar, almost obscured by centuries of polish, stain and dirt, are a number of different apotropaic marks. These can only be seen clearly, when the sun strikes at a low angle. They have not been noted before. This could well be the site of the extra pew needed for the increased number of boys, requested by Matthew Shortyng, headmaster, 1691-1707. The boys would have

evil powers have no effect. Quite why they can't exit where they entered, isn't apparent. A hexfoil, a six-petalled flower in a circle, is in the gallery. Elaborations of this are still used by the Amish and for the same purpose. By the altar, are a couple of spectacle graffiti, looking more like a pince-nez and not common. Then, more and more elaborate constructions of rings of overlapping circles are on the same panel and above a radiator by the organ.

In the gallery is a witch in her distinctive, high, pointed hat, her right hand extended towards a church. She appears to walk along a path, or climb some stairs, or stand in the toothed mouth of hell. Interpret it as you will, sadly, she doesn't have a pistol in her other hand, a sliver of wood has become detached. A depressed-looking devil is on the panel by the altar. Children in Syrian refugee camps draw planes and guns, illustrating and perhaps reducing the

continued on page 14 ➔



# THE 18C COURTYARD

**F**or over three centuries **Bevis Marks Synagogue** has been hidden away in a courtyard in the Ward of Aldgate. Built in 1701, the synagogue is situated behind a wall, and once a solid wood gate, hidden from the eyes of other Londoners. Historians refer to this sort of synagogue as 'Private Worship,' as opposed to the 'Public Worship' of synagogues today built upon main thoroughfares, like any other religious building. Of course, 18C was very different from 21C, but already back in 19C the front gate was replaced with an iron one, so the synagogue could be visible to any passers-by.

In fact, 'gate' is the actual name of the synagogue. In Hebrew it is called 'Sha'ar Hashamayim' (as inscribed above the entrance) which means 'Gate of Heaven.' When Jacob dreamed of the ladder which connected heaven and earth, upon awakening he exclaimed, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen.28:17). For Jews, their synagogues are always 'Gates of Heaven.' However, for London's Jews, this name may have had additional meaning. At the time of the synagogue's construction, London was still a walled city, with gates leading in and out. Surrounding streets still bear these names: Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Moorgate, etc. One could imagine the Jewish community at that time noting that whilst the surrounding gates led to London, their 'gate' led to God, and so they named it thus.

The synagogue wasn't the first house of worship to be built on the site. In medieval times it was land of the **Abbey of Bury St Edmunds**, a fact still alluded to in the names of the surrounding roads: Bury Street, and once, probably, Bury's Mark, now Bevis Marks, the more common name of the synagogue today.

Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in the 1530s, and the abbey land was eventually given to Sir

Robert Heneage of his Privy Chamber. His son, Sir Thomas Heneage, who served Queen Elizabeth I, tried for treason Dr Rodrigo Lopez, one of the few Jews to live in England between the Expulsion of 1290 and the Readmission of 1656. Heneage's name survives in Heneage Lane, the third street along the boundary of the synagogue. Indeed, it was there in 1620 that the Pilgrim Fathers lived in Heneage House, as they organised their expedition to the New World, making the synagogue a significant City of London site as we celebrate Mayflower 2020 this summer.

The Jews who built Bevis Marks Synagogue, had previously prayed in a private home in nearby Creechurch Lane, in what is known by historians as 'House Worship.' However, as the community grew in the latter 17C, they embarked on a plan to build the first purpose-built synagogue in England in centuries. These Jews had come from Iberia where they had been forced to live outwardly as Catholics, and only in secret as Jews. This is why the community is also known as the Spanish & Portuguese Jews Congregation. In fact, until the end of 18C Portuguese remained the *lingua franca* of the community, and would have been readily heard within its courtyard. It is the language of the archives until 1820.

In addition to the synagogue, there was an orphanage and boys' and girls' schools, as well as other community institutions.

These buildings can still be seen on maps of the area into the late 19C, before the community sold off most of this land, as its members gravitated towards West London.

However, one can imagine the hustle and bustle within the courtyard as people came to pray, others to buy kosher food, and children went to school. A relic of this time can still be found in the outer wall of the synagogue where a child, presumably, etched his name, Jacob, in Hebrew, into a brick (see the front cover).

Another sign of this bygone time are the boot scrapers that sit outside the entrance to the synagogue. Entering the courtyard you walk down a gradual slope, as the street level of London is now higher than it was several hundred years ago. At that time, all of the muck of London's notoriously foul streets would have been at risk of ending up in this House of God. Thankfully, the boot scrapers were there to ensure it did not!


While most enthusiasts focus their attention on the incredibly well preserved Wren-style interior of the synagogue itself, the courtyard and location of the synagogue is surely notable in its own right. The community is now embarking on the building of a National Lottery Heritage Fund, match-sponsored Heritage Centre, with the royal patronage of Prince Charles. It is due to be completed in 2022 and will showcase the historic objects and archives of the community, documenting the history of Jews and the City of London over 350 years. It will of course also highlight the synagogue itself, as well as the significance of its location and courtyard. So, before construction begins, be sure to walk by the synagogue and take a look inside its gate! 



PHOTO: LOUIS BERK





Left: the ringing room at St Magnus the Martyr, photographed immediately after the bells were prepared for their Covid hibernation.

Right: the belfry at St Olave Hart Street, where the bells are all in the down position. You can see the vertical wooden stays that would otherwise prop the bells up.



DICKON LOVE

## THE SILENCE OF THE BELLS

Walking through the City of London during these unusual times, noting how strangely empty the streets are, reminds me of the days before Sunday opening. Sundays in the City were certainly good opportunities to wander the streets without the disturbance of crowds of commuters or tourists. But there is a key difference. On those Sundays you could hear the City's bells ringing out for the various services in the day, or in celebration. The mighty **St Paul's Cathedral** bells rang three times on a Sunday and spread their music into the small streets around. How often would you hear the bells of a church before you turned the corner to see where the sound was coming from?

Today the belfries are as silent as the church buildings they rise above. And just as worshippers have been discouraged from travelling into the City, so have the bellringers. As we see the churches begin to open, and the congregations cautiously gather, the bells have had to remain silent, save the individual ones that can be chimed at the flip of a switch by the clergy, for example at **All Hallows Barking by the Tower**.

It is easy to see why bellringing is likely to be one of the last aspects of church life to resume. Ringers must climb the same small spiral staircases, one behind the other. Our ringing rooms are quite small with barely a

metre (if that) between the ropes. The act of ringing itself is a physical activity, increasing the heart rate and enhanced, anaerobic breathing into the small space available. The viral load would be tantamount to that in a gym, and gyms generally have more ventilation than ringing rooms!

From February it was increasingly apparent that ringing would need to stop. Minutes after Boris Johnson announced the first of the lockdown measures, I was meeting the regular band of ringers at **Birmingham Cathedral**, where I organise weekly peals (typically 3h 30m of performance ringing). After a quick discussion with the Dean, we abandoned the ringing and were in the pub. Back in London, where I co-ordinate the ringing at **St Magnus the Martyr**, **St Dunstan in the West** and **St James Garlickhythe**, I cancelled all ringing until further notice, as did my fellow Tower Captains.

Hard hit were the Royal Jubilee Bellringers, whose practice I run every Thursday evening at St James Garlickhythe. We made efforts to keep in touch with regular Zoom quiz nights. Then some bright inventive souls in America produced 'Ringing Room', a virtual bellringing application, where people can log on, get assigned individual bells by the ringing leader (as happens in the real world), and then practise the different methods by 'ringing' their bell at the touch of a keyboard or mouse. More of a computer game than a bellringing experience, this device has nonetheless helped people keep the bellringing theory in their minds, and have fun seeing each other at the same time.

So, what of the silent bells and belfries themselves? Normally belfries are left unattended with all the bells in the 'down' position, that is, with the mouth of the bell and clapper hanging down from their headstocks, which themselves hang from the bearings attached to the bell frame. Because the bells at St Magnus the Martyr are so large, they are normally left in the 'up' position, with the mouth of the bell facing upwards, the clapper resting against the bell, and the whole arrangement propped up with the near vertical timber 'stay' from the headstock resting against the horizontal timber 'slider' under the frame. Whilst it is fine to leave bells like this for a week at a time, it is not ideal for months. One by one I had to ring each bell until it settled into its 'down' position, ready for Covid hibernation. The tower was then locked, and as extra security, additional measures were taken to strengthen the small entrance door to the tower.

As for the bearings of the bells, fortunately they are of the modern ball bearing variety and therefore will need little attention when we resume. **St Mary Woolnoth** is the exception and will indeed need my trusty oil can before we ring those again!

We do have a strategy for re-opening the belfries stage by stage when the time is right. Small groups ringing for short periods of time will eventually give way to the busier groups providing the expected soundtrack to the City skyline. When that happens, we will know that this difficult period is finally over, and the bells will ring out in thanksgiving. ✨





PHILIP WHITEMORE

## WHERE THERE IS BRASS ...

*Worth his Salt: The Brass to Andrew Ewyngar of 1533, at All Hallows Barking by the Tower*

**W**ithout doubt the brass to Andrew Ewyngar of 1533, at All Hallows Barking by the Tower, is the most important surviving brass in a City church. Although slightly worn, much of its design is still discernible. While the majority of brasses in London were engraved either in the City itself (or from late Tudor times, Southwark) this example came from Flanders and

as such was a more impressive and costly memorial. English brasses were generally cut out to the shape of the figure, while those produced on the Continent were engraved on rectangular plates, sometimes joined together to make a larger area. Ewyngar's brass is on a single plate.

When originally placed in the church it comprised, besides the brass plate, a stone slab with an incised

inscription in Latin with verses from the Office for the Dead. This was incised around the edges of the slab and also above and below the plate, with at the corners, symbols of the four evangelists. By the 1830s the slab had become worn and had been cut down on the left side in order to allow a new gravestone to be placed next to it.

In 1864 the brass was in the nave, but by 1934 it had been moved to the east end. Following the destruction of the church in the Second World War, the brass was placed in the sanctuary in a new stone slab where it remains to this day.

Evyngar is shown with his wife, in long flowing robes, with his hands raised in prayer. He is standing on a chequered pavement, under twin arches in the centre of which is a *Pietà*. His wife wears a long flowing dress, with a belt from which hangs a rosary. On her head is a draped headdress. Behind the figures is a richly designed tapestry wall covering that was originally red. Standing next to his father is Ewyngar's son attired just like his father, while opposite them are his five daughters, they in turn dressed like their mother. Above the figures are the arms of the Merchant Adventurers and the Salters' Company. The latter contains an engraver's error as the chevron has been inadvertently reversed. From the man's mouth is a scroll bearing the inscription *O filij dei miserere mei* (Son of God have mercy on me) while his wife's scroll reads *O mater dei memento mei* (Mother of God, remember me). In front of the group is his merchant's mark.

Below are the remains of the inscription, the greater part of which was carefully removed by William Shurland in 1643 on the order of the parish. He was paid 16/- to 'erase the superstitious letters from the brasses' to comply with religious thinking of the day. Originally in raised lettering the inscription read (the missing portions enclosed in square brackets): [Off your charite pray for the sowls] of Andrewe/Ewyngar cytcze(n) of london and Ellyn/hys [wyff on whoose soulys ihesu haue m(er)cy ame(n)].





Above: the mutilated inscription of the Ewyngar brass. Below: rubbing from the brass to Thomas Pownder, 1525, now in Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich, from H W Macklin, *The Brasses of England* (1907)

With his trading links to the continent, Ewyngar or his executor, would have had the contacts necessary to order such a grand memorial and he may even have played a part in its design. No mention is made in his will about his memorial but his executor would have been aware of the kind of memorial that was required, and this was certainly a monument indicating status.

Andrew's parents, John and Jacomyn Ewyngar, were of Brabantine origin, who had settled in London in about 1479. John became a citizen in 1496. He was a brewer importing sacks of hops from Flanders, and exporting large quantities of beer to the continent. He was also brewing for home consumption from his brew house in St Martin in the Fields.

By his wife Ellyn, Andrew had a son, also called Andrew, and a daughter, Elizabeth, and although

other children are shown on the brass they may well have died young. Very little is known about Andrew, as any information about him in the Salters' Company records was destroyed in the Great Fire. His will tells us that he was a resident of the parish of **St Mary at Hill**, to which church he left 5/-. To his wife he left his 'bere house' and three tenements at Charing Cross, with the remainder to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of Robert Lorde. Lorde was to receive Andrew's gold ring. He was also bound to the churchwardens for £30 to keep a yearly obit following the death of Jacomyn, his father John and for the soul of Andrew, their son. Ellyn was still alive in 1548 as she was mentioned in a grant of that year.

Ewyngar's brass is very similar to that of Thomas Pownder, merchant, 1525 and his wife, formerly in **St Mary Quay**, Ipswich, and now in Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich, Suffolk. It has a number of characteristics that are mirrored on the Ewyngar brass showing that both brasses came from the same workshop. Both may be early attempts at portraiture by an unidentified Flemish artist. Like the All Hallows brass, Pownder's also has an incorrectly drawn shield (see left). ❧

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CRYSTAL HOLLIS

## Watching Brief

If able, everyone should church Watch at least once. If not for the experience of interacting with other church enthusiasts, genealogists, historians, storytellers, etc, then for the experience of spending a few hours in a smallish church with the opportunity to really examine it in detail – sometimes with a new or an old friend! Church Watching gives you space to breathe, to look at wood carvings, glass windows, an odd monument tucked behind a door, chandeliers with eagle heads on them, and stone that looks just a bit too old or too new to have been there originally. Because of the time spent sitting and looking and learning, church Watching is what has enabled me to pursue my career as a historic graffiti specialist.

Some days are very quiet and almost no one comes in, and you get to really look around for things you haven't noticed before. Others, there are so many visitors the time flies by. Sometimes they know things about the church you don't, or have a story about their family or childhood to share. You can meet descendants of past parishioners, who have travelled from as far as Australia to see a monument. Other times you can meet someone who has never visited a historic church before and wandered in by chance – you have the chance to be part of someone's first impression of that church – or even historic churches in general. You'll eventually find yourself seeking out guidebooks, making room on your shelf for Pevsner, eager to visit other places, to compare buildings and their respective features. Church Watching has been and continues to be a wonderful opportunity to sit, share, teach, and learn.





**Lesley Thrift writes:** Judy Guy-Briscoe and I were Watching at **St Dunstan in the West**. A French couple came in with an elderly lady. They had a look round and went on their way. A little while later the old lady came back obviously distressed – she couldn't speak any English. Luckily a German family was in the church. They took over with the

translation into French. She had lost her daughter and her partner. (They had her passport and money, and she didn't know the name of the hotel where they were staying, only that they had arrived on Eurostar, and there was a market near the hotel!)

We waited in the hope that the daughter would realise she had lost her mother and return. This

wasn't to be – so we telephoned the police to say we had a missing person. They duly turned up at the church door on horseback. Yes, the City Police had dispatched a mounted policewoman and rather jolily she said she couldn't get the lady



on the horse, and suggested we take her to the French Embassy. We shut up the church and then took a taxi to the French Embassy only to be told no – we needed the consulate. We then took her there. We asked if they would tell us when the family was re-united. No, we never ever heard a word – it was like a mirage.

**Marion Watson writes:** Before the FCC moved into **St Mary Abchurch** I was there Watching when a master carpenter came to look at the woodwork. He was interested in the box pews at the north side and pointed out that the doors had been rearranged. Catch them at an angle and you can read some of the old pew numbers. Try for yourself when we are allowed back.

**Katrina Bradley writes:** I'm not sure what these angels are supposed to be or represent but they all are identical and face different directions.

When they were first installed, I wondered: are they looking pensive because they are waiting for somebody



→ continued from page 9

## GRAFITTI IN ST MARY ABCHURCH

power of what is dreaded. Perhaps these figures, the only ones I have found recorded in a City church, fulfil the same function.

Why all this worry about evil spirits, devils and witches? Fear of the latter was declining, although Alice Mollard as recently as 1684 in Exeter, was the last woman to be executed as a witch. Perhaps this sparked morbid interest. The boys would have walked through the City, still a building site, and although none of them had experienced either Plague or Fire, parents and relatives would have told them harrowing accounts of the loss of houses, businesses and income and the terror of catching a deadly disease. (Current panic and distress about the coronavirus resonates here.)



If this all sounds very primitive and far from our rational times, how many of us, dear reader, touch wood, refuse to walk under

a ladder or toss spilled salt over a shoulder?

Just in case.

### SECULAR

How many of us, also, will have cut our initials or names on to desks, trees or walls? So did the Abchurch residents. Typically an outline was lightly made, then the point of a knife bored a series of holes. These were then joined by cut

lines to form the letters. In a box pew JOHN laboriously cut his name deeply into the wood. By 1686, the letter J had been separated from I, which suggests that he was an older man, who had no intention of using the new-fangled letter J to spell his name.



Many of the schoolboys left two initials and a date in small outlines of what appear to be buildings. These may be memorials. One scholar either had an unfortunate set of initials or left a minor three-lettered vulgarity – a comment on a teacher or fellow student? An unusual graffiti is a multiplication sum calculating the number of days in seven years  $365 \times 7 = 2555$ . The answer is correct: no leap years, as per the Julian Calendar.

An organ was not installed in the gallery until 1822. Undoubtedly there are more graffiti hidden by it and also in the high box pews. **St Martin Ludgate** and **St James Garlickhythe** are well worth searching for graffiti, having, like Abchurch, so much original woodwork.

The damage to the new woodwork in 1686 must have been infuriating to the church, but to us is of interest. Do not feel impelled to delight people in 24C in the same way. ✂

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# MEMBER, MEMBER

to come? Are they sitting on their swings watching the traffic? Or are they simply observing the constant stream of humanity, going underneath them as they hurry to work? To St Paul's tube station? To St Paul's as visitors? Or going shopping in Cheapside? Now there is little to watch: few cars and the virtually empty buses driving past.

Me, well I'm pleased I actually had the opportunity to photograph them – that is one of the good things about the lockdown, and I hope you enjoy looking at them and like me, wonder what on earth they are doing there?!

**James Lovely writes:** Not much happens Watching at **All Hallows London Wall**. On 16 March 2012 a slightly unshaven young man, dressed in an army camouflage jacket and dirty denim jeans walked in saying he was often in the church and just wanted a bit of blank paper (?). He thought our body language was sending out the wrong message, whatever that was. He told us that the Archbishop of Canterbury had resigned, and he then staggered out.

A few minutes later Michael Young walked in with supplies of the next issue of *City Events* and we asked him about the Archbishop: it wasn't on the last BBC News bulletin, and we

thought no more about the matter. Later in the Watch the same unshaven young man returned, clutching copies of the *Evening Standard* and gave us a copy. You can guess the headlines. Appearances can be deceptive!

**Frances Rollason writes:** While recording at **St Lawrence Jewry** some years ago, I had to take some measurements in the organ loft. For this I needed the key. After doing the measurements, I went home and to my dismay found I still had the organ loft key in my pocket. Next morning I arrived at the church early. The administrator and the vicar were searching everywhere. The resident organist was away and a locum was playing for the morning service. The key I had taken home was the only spare! Should I add I have a habit of picking up keys?

**Chris Dolan writes:** Longer established Watchers will remember the man who came weekly to play the organ at **All Hallows on the Wall** in the days when administrator George Middleton looked after the church immaculately. On 24 April 2009, the first occasion when I sat with Marion Watson, the organist (unusually for him) came down for a chat with the Watchers. The conversation revealed that within the following week or so all three of us (quite independently


of course) were going to be spending time in Budapest: Marion to visit her son who lived there at the time, the others just for a short break. If our common destination had been, say, Paris it might have seemed coincidence enough – but Budapest!

**Pauline Robertson writes:** Many years ago, I was watching at **St Martin Ludgate** with my dear friend Beryl Jameson. A woman came in carrying a small case and in a very distressed state. She told us that she was due to meet a friend by **St Paul's** before catching a plane home, and that she'd left her handbag with tickets, passport, etc, on the No 11 bus – heading towards Liverpool Street bus station – which she had just got off outside the church. In those days (and of course before the advent of the mobile phone) St Martin had a caretaker/verger and he quickly got on to Directory Enquiries and got the number of the bus depot somewhere in south London. He was told not to worry – the bus driver would be contacted and if the handbag were still on board, our distressed visitor could pick it up outside City Thameslink station when the bus did its return journey. We decided that maybe a quick prayer might be the thing, and our prayers were answered! She did indeed retrieve her bag much to everyone's relief.

MUSIC FRIEND  BRIAN EVANS

## BOMBSHELL

A large stone plaque on London's Fore Street, east of **St Giles Cripplegate**, indicates where the first bomb fell in the Blitz of September 1940. At that time, your Music Friend was carried daily (his mother *enceinte*) from the large H J Heinz warehouse on Cardiff's dockside to an adjacent air raid shelter, as sirens wailed. He accompanied the vital ledger

of canned food imports for home and overseas forces – a ledger so crucial in pre-computer days. Thus, his love of the City churches secretly began, while the life of eight such churches from **Christ Church Greyfriars** to **St Swithin London Stone** came to an end. The Welsh, blue-stone memorial to Catrin Glyndŵr, who was buried in St Swithin churchyard in 1413, was erected in 2001. In the words of the poet Menna Elfyn 'far away from home...an exile's silent song' 





JOHN REYNOLDS

Had this been a normal year, the City churches would have afforded us the opportunity to have heard Handel's *Messiah* at least once. In June 2014 a workshop devoted to choral compositions by Handel was held in the church of **St Alban the Martyr** to commemorate the 275th Anniversary of the granting in 1739 by George II of the Royal Charter which resulted in the foundation of the Foundling Hospital. The Minute Book of the General Committee of the Foundling Hospital records the first appearance of George Frederic Handel in its history on 4 May 1749: 'Mr Handel being present and having generously and charitably offered a performance of vocal and instrumental music to be held at this Hospital, and that the money arising therefrom be applied to finishing the chapel of the Hospital'.

Philanthropic sea-captain Thomas Coram, whose magnificent tomb is in **St Andrew Holborn**, established the Foundling Hospital for the 'education and maintenance of exposed and deserted young children'. The Hospital was essentially the birthplace of dedicated social care for children. In 1954, it ceased to be residential and changed its name to the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children,

better known today as Coram.

The original site of the Foundling Hospital has a positive connection to what is there now. After the original Hospital was demolished in the 1920s, seven acres of the site were purchased for use as a playground for children, and this area is now called Coram's Fields. The Foundling Hospital itself bought back 2.5 acres of land in 1937 and built a new headquarters and a children's centre on the site in what is now Brunswick Square. Although smaller, the building is in a similar style to the original Foundling Hospital and important aspects of the interior architecture were recreated there. It is now the administrative base of Coram and it also houses the Foundling Museum, an independent charity, which explores the history of the Hospital.

The Foundling Museum also contains an important art collection which includes works by some of Britain's most prominent 18c artists: William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, Louis-François Roubiliac and many others. These paintings and sculptures, donated by the artists themselves, were given in order to support the Foundling

Hospital and effectively made the institution the UK's first public art gallery. The Museum also houses the unique Gerald Coke Handel Collection which enables visitors to learn about Handel's connection to the Foundling Hospital and see his will, alongside manuscripts and printed scores, books, works of art, programmes and ephemera. A fair copy of Handel's *Messiah*, left to the Hospital at his death, is also displayed.

The concert held in May 1749 was essentially a benefit concert to help to complete the chapel in the original Foundling Hospital. That concert included an anthem written by Handel for the occasion, now known as the *Foundling Hospital Anthem*, using music taken from other works by Handel and ends with a version of the *Hallelujah Chorus*. These works were sung in the concert that took place at the end of the choral workshop that took place in St Alban the Martyr in June 2014.

Today, the Foundling Hospital with its fascinating history, continues as the children's charity Coram, with a mission to improve the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people and thus to provide support for them from birth to independence. The strain on their family lives caused by lockdown has highlighted the need for Coram's work. ✨

## THE FRIENDS OF THE CITY CHURCHES

St Mary Abchurch Abchurch Lane London EC4N 7BA

[www.london-city-churches.org.uk](http://www.london-city-churches.org.uk)

020 7626 1555

[contact\\_us@london-city-churches.org.uk](mailto:contact_us@london-city-churches.org.uk)

[contact\\_details@london-city-churches.org.uk](mailto:contact_details@london-city-churches.org.uk)

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